

VZCZCXRO3952
OO RUEHRG
DE RUEHRI #0440/01 3451723
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0063
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE IMMEDIATE 0026
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 RIO DE JANEIRO 000440

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: DOES RIO'S FAVELA PACIFICATION PROGRAM RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS?

REF: RIO DE JANEIRO 329; RIO DE JANEIRO 404; RIO DE JANEIRO 353
RIO DE JANEIRO 311

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Human rights and favela community representatives generally support Rio de Janeiro's Favela Pacification Program and report no killings related to the 450 Pacification Police Unit (UPP) officers that patrol the four favela shanty towns now under "pacification." While acknowledging there have been no reports of UPP human rights violations since the program began a year ago, some human rights groups and favela representatives harbor suspicions over the true aims of the Pacification Program. Although the UPP's human rights record is thus far positive, the number of allegations of human rights abuses by the Rio state Military Police, especially extrajudicial killings, is alarming, with Human Rights Watch leadership releasing a report in Rio de Janeiro on December 9 that highlighted alleged human rights abuses here and in Sao Paulo. According to human rights experts, the 2016 Olympic Games offer both an opportunity and challenge to improve the Rio police's human rights record, especially considering the high incidents of police killings that led up to the 2007 Pan American Games in Rio. End Comment.

POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN PACIFIED FAVELAS

¶2. (SBU) Human rights and favela community representatives generally support Rio de Janeiro's Favela Pacification Program (reftel A) and report no killings related to the 450 Pacification Police Unit (UPP) officers that patrol the four favela shantytowns now under "pacification." Rafael Dias of Global Justice, one of the most prestigious human rights groups in Rio de Janeiro, told us on December 1 that the record of the UPP on human rights was thus far positive, explaining there have been no reported killings by the UPP officers since Rio de Janeiro state and municipal authorities launched the program one year ago. (Note: Authorities have to date "pacified" four favelas, i.e. eliminated drug-trafficking elements, established a sustained UPP presence, and started provisions of basic services. Anti-narco trafficking operations are still underway in a fifth favela (reftel B), which will receive UPP officers to conduct community policing as soon as the security situation fully stabilizes. End note). Franciso Marcelo from the Observatory of Rio de Janeiro Favelas told us on November 30 that crime indicators - especially homicides - are much lower in pacified communities and the provision of basic services, such as electricity and trash collecting, is steadily improving. Itamar Silva, Director of the Observatory of Rio de Janeiro Favelas also offered conditional praise of the UPP, citing the experience of the pacified favela Santa Marta, where local residents support

the UPP presence due to a vastly improved security climate (reftel C).

...BUT IN STARK CONTRAST TO OVERALL POLICE RECORD

¶3. (SBU) Although the UPP's record to date on respecting human rights is positive, the number of allegations of human rights abuses by the Rio state Military Police, especially extrajudicial killings, is not. On December 8, Human Rights Watch (HWR) published a report entitled "Brazil: Lethal Force," which focuses on police violence in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. HWR's Director for the Americas Jose Miguel Vivanco and Associate Director Daniel Wilkenson, who announced the release of the report in Rio de Janeiro, expressed specific concern over alleged resisting-arrest killings. During a meeting with a Harvard University alumni group - attended by Poloff and PAO - on the day of the release, Vivanco and Wilkenson said the 1,137 police killings documented as resisting arrest in Rio state in 2008 constituted a "dramatic" figure. They claimed forensic evidence and case studies compiled over the past four years led them to conclude many such incidents were extrajudicial killings. While condemning such acts, Vivanco and Wilkenson conceded Military Police faced a "huge challenge" of critical violence in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and praised the

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receptiveness of Rio's Governor Sergio Cabral to the report's findings and proposals. The following day, however, Rio's State Security for Public Security Jose Mariano Beltrame publically called the report biased, and defended the UPP law enforcement model as the best way to reduce the number of killings documented as resisting arrest. (Note: The HRW report referred to the Favela Pacification Program as a positive initiative, but did not independently evaluate the program. End Note). Cabral also later came out in the press criticizing the report as highlighting only the negative aspects of police conduct, and not recognizing "good police."

¶4. (SBU) Local human rights groups also strongly criticize the levels of force exercised by conventional police forces, as well as wide-spread corruption. According to Global Justice's Dias, military police do not make a distinction between criminals and ordinary favela residents, part of the cause for the large number of police-related killings. Furthermore, he stated corrupt police fueled violence in the favelas, recalling incidents where police even rented out arms, ammunition, and vehicles to rival drug factions engaged in de facto wars for control of favela territory and narcotics markets. Monica Francisco of Group Arteiras, a favela women's rights group, complained of a history of rampant police corruption in the communities, which fomented a high level of mistrust of the police. Rosino deCastro Diniz, President of the Federation of Rio de Janeiro Favela Associations said the risk of UPP corruption was his greatest concern about the Pacification Program. In fact, according to Itimar Silva, Director of the Brazilian Institute for Social Analysis (IBASE), police corruption is what ultimately led to the demise of an initiative similar to the Favela Pacification Program in 1986. "The police tried this before," he said, "until they themselves got involved with drug trafficking."

THE OLYMPICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

¶5. (SBU) According to human rights experts, the 2016 Olympic Games offer both an opportunity and possible challenge to improve Rio's human rights climate. HWR's Vivanco said the Olympics were "the best news for human rights in Rio," as the designation of host city would put the spotlight on the problem and offer authorities an

opportunity to capitalize on increased attention and resources. HWR's Wilkenson cautioned, however, that the Olympics could worsen the situation in Rio, recounting the experience in Beijing, when government respect for human rights worsened prior to and during the Games. He offered further caution by recalling Rio's hosting of the 2007 Pan American Games, when police killed some 20 persons in the massive favela Complexo de Alemão in one day alone. Global Justice's Dias also expressed concern that a large police crackdown due to the Olympics would result in more extrajudicial killings. With the Pan American Games experience in mind, Global Justice has already started discussing this issue with large, international human rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights, to create a global network of groups with a specific focus on the Olympics.

GROUPS QUESTION MOTIVES OF PACIFICATION

16. (SBU) While acknowledging there were no reports of UPP human rights violations thus far, human rights activists and NGO leaders express suspicion over the government's true aims in pushing the Pacification Program. Francisco Marcelo from the Observatory of Rio de Janeiro Favelas questioned the construction of walls around various favela communities. Although the Rio Municipal Government states these walls are necessary to protect surrounding rainforest from further encroachment, as in the case of pacified favela Dona Marta, or as highway noise shields for favela residents, as in the case of Complexo de Mare, Fernando said these explanations were not credible and masked authorities' attempts to further segregate favelas from mainstream communities (reftel D). Group Arteiras' Monica Francisco also suspected the implementation of UPP officers in favelas constituted nothing more than a short-term "emergency response" to the demands by Rio's residents to address the favela issue. Global Justice's Dias also questioned the presence of

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short-circuit video cameras in the pacified favela Dona Marta, stating locals viewed the cameras as an "intrusion." (Comment: While hosting a tour of a pacified favela for Principal Officer and other consulate officers, State Security Secretary Beltrame explained these cameras were a crucial component in the UPP's security scheme for the favela. End Comment). Francisco echoed this sentiment, explaining that while supporting the pacification of the favela where he lived, he would oppose any installation of cameras in as an intrusion of privacy and unreasonable means of "control." He also hoped that UPP officers would not resort to the same sort of corruption and violence he had witnessed in other conventional forces during prior operations in his favela.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) Considering the legacy of heavy-handed violence by the military police and the mistrust between them and Rio's poorest and most violent favela communities, it is noteworthy that UPP officers have had as much success sustaining their operations, without major incidents, over a year's time. The absence of allegations of human rights abuses or police corruption in these four pacified favelas from organized groups is equally significant. Security officials have adopted special standards for UPP officers, such as accepting only new recruits so as to avoid the risk of prior corruption and instituting mandatory human rights training, which have undoubtedly been factors in the UPP's good human rights record so far. In addition, narco-trafficking groups have yet to openly resist the UPP forces, either with directed violence or general propaganda. Should they do so, this could test the UPP's heretofore solid human rights record. End Comment.

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